

STATE HEROIN TASKFORCE REMARKS

I. Introduction

- **Lt. Governor Rutherford, members of the heroin taskforce....thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak on this important issue today.**
- **I, like the Governor, heard stories of heroin addiction while on the campaign trail, and came to office determined to address this growing crisis....a problem I refer to as the octopus from hell.**

II. The Heroin Problem

- **The heroin addiction crisis touches every corner of Anne Arundel County.**
- **It doesn't matter if you live in Glen Burnie...Annapolis...Severna Park....or Odenton...or Pasadena...you probably know someone who has been affected by the heroin problem.**
- **The statistics are frightening...**
 - **In 2014, there were 308 overdoses associated with heroin and other opiates in our county.**
 - **48 of those were fatal.**
 - **And...this year....we continue suffering roughly a fatality week because of these drugs...as the heroin problem continues destroy lives and ruin families.**

III. Anne Arundel County Action on Heroin Crisis

- **Many people have warned me...this is a huge problem...it's a tidal wave....but I tell them...if we can save one life....it is worth it.**
- **And we've made some progress just in the last few months.**
- **At the state level...we pushed for legislation that would help us in this fight..**
 - **We were successful, through the hard work of our Anne Arundel County Delegation, in getting the General Assembly to pass legislation, HB 368, protecting first responders administering the heroin overdose reversing drug narkan.**
 - **Now our EMS, fire, and police personnel statewide can administer this live saving drug without fear of facing an unnecessary lawsuit for simply doing their jobs.**
- **At the county level, we've tried to address this crisis with every means at our disposal.**
- **Upon coming into office, I gathered all affected county departments heads together...formed a county taskforce...outlined all existing programs...and then charged them with coming up with ideas for expanding programs and new programs to deal with this growing problem.**

- Those recommendations formed the basis of our heroin action plan that we are in the process of implementing now.
- It's a blue print to tackle this issue from all angles with a three pronged approach:
 - Education (engaged school board, community college to get to those young students before they become addicted...)
 - Treatment (looking to invest in better treatment options in south/mid county where treatment programs are scarce.)
 - Enforcement: our heroin intra-county law enforcement taskforce has already made some big busts...and they are going to continue.
- We believe this plan will help save lives.
- That is what our county effort really boils down to: real people....facing difficult choices...who have a feeling a hopelessness.
- The human dimension of addiction...the struggle...is something that that often gets lost in the discussion of this issue.
- And...unfortunately...I've met too many people who've been touched by this crisis.
- It's them we are really fighting for

IV. Heroin Town Hall

- **Never was seriousness of this problem demonstrated more powerfully than during a recent heroin town hall forum we had in our county.**
- **More than 400 people came to Anne Arundel Community College to hear a panel of experts outline treatment options and what we are doing to turn the tide in our county.**
- **It was a room filled with emotion and pain... and it is something I'll never forget.**
- **We heard the stories of lives destroyed...of children lost....of families ripped apart by addiction.**
- **Person after person would come to microphone and demand answers....**
 - **Why aren't there more treatment beds available?**
 - **Why can't my brother get help?**
 - **Why is it so easy to get this drug on the streets?**

V. Call to action

- **While we are working to address many of those questions on a county level...we need our state government to play a role.**

- **This is just not an Anne Arundel County problem...the other county and city leaders who've spoken today demonstrate that...**
 - **We're committed to doing our part as county to open up treatment opportunities for our citizens....as well as helping educate them to the dangers of addiction.**
 - **But we need the resources available to help us save lives.**
- **Working together...I believe state and county governments can turn the tide against heroin through effective and collaborative partnership in our health, education, and law enforcement systems.**
- **But we need to act together sooner rather than later, because with every day we delay...we see more heartache, more tragedy, and more lives destroyed.**
- **Thank you.**